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INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING LOCAL DISTRICT RESEARCH WORKERS. FINAL REPORT.

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An 8-week summer institute designed to train 26 public school persons as research workers for their local school districts was conducted at the University of Florida in 1966. A year-long followup consisted of 1 two-day and 4 one-day seminars to discuss and evaluate progress in research methodology. Institute courses included (1) research techniques and methodology, (2) data processing and computer operation, (3) research design, and (4) research evaluation. One of the program's major strengths was the high level of morale noted among both students and staff; the rapport which developed not only facilitated individual research, but initiated a continuing cooperation between the University and the county school systems. Weaknesses of the program resulted from late notification of funding which handicapped selection of a homogeneous group of trainees. The staff considers the program successful. It recommends, however, that future institutes reduce the emphasis on statistics and computer language and increase the emphasis on practical application of research. (JS)

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INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING LOCAL DISTRICT RESEARCH WORKERS

FINAL REPORT

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ORIENTATION OF PROGRAM

This program for the training of research workers at the local school district level consisted of a six-week summer institute with a year-long follow-up of four one-day and one two-day seminars held during Trimesters I and II. The inclusive dates for the total program were: June 1, 1966 through April 1, 1967.

The twenty-six students that participated in the institute were from seventeen different counties in Florida. Time between grant notification and the final selection of enrollees was too short to permit dissemination of the announcements so that a wider geographical participation could be secured. All were employed in some form of public school work. Job responsibilities ranged from county research coordinator to home economics teacher. Six of the enrollees were female. The average age of enrollees was 30.7 years. All were recommended through their superintendents' offices. While a very few had a mathematics background all were at a beginning level of statistics and data processing. A very few had had limited research or proposal writing experience.

The nature of the program necessitated the establishment of short-range objectives, as attempted through the summer session, and long-range objectives, as sought through the academic year follow-up. The objectives may be stated explicitly as follows:

A. Short-Range Objectives

1. To improve existing knowledge or skills in the areas of research design and methodology, statistical analysis, program evaluation, data processing, and individual and team research.
2. To broaden concepts of educational research through some consideration of works in other behavioral sciences.
3. To provide practice and assistance in the design of research projects.
4. To provide or improve rudimentary training in the application of computer operations to research and data processing.
5. To provide opportunities for group sharing of information and experience concerning research as motivation for further research activities.

B. Long-Range Objectives

1. To institute studies aimed toward the improvement of research activities within the local district.
2. To assist local districts in conducting institutional studies which can provide better bases for decision making.
3. To encourage the establishment of facilities for the testing of basic research findings in a broad range of actual situations.

4. To encourage cooperative research development and dissemination at the local district level and improve communications and cooperation between the university and the local school district.
5. To encourage and assist in the establishment of centers capable of providing facilities for practicums and internships in training research workers.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

The instructional program was conducted in two phases--a six-week intensive study during the 1966 summer session and an academic year follow-up consisting of small-group seminar activities. Unique characteristics of each of these phases are presented in the following descriptions.

A. Summer Program

Participants were taught in a special class employing a block-of-time approach to instruction. This allowed a full-time approach to the program and enrollees were available for activities scheduled during morning, afternoon, and evening hours. Such an approach allowed the flexibility in scheduling activities necessary to meet participants' individual needs and to take full advantage of learning opportunities arising during the course of the program. This was particularly advantageous, due to the wide background of the participants. Though the class was specially organized, the offering was within the framework of the College of Education policies and carried six semester hours of credit, which was applicable toward advanced degrees.

The course content of the program was structured around four general areas of study as follows:

1. Research Techniques and Methodology: The initial efforts were devoted to the study of procedures which facilitated research at the institutional level. Various techniques were investigated along with the implication which their use has for local requirements in gathering, evaluating, and interpreting data.
2. Data Processing and Computer Operations: Concurrent with a portion of the study of techniques, and continuing through the remainder of the program, was a study of methods for analyzing data. Though various systems of data processing were considered, the major emphasis was placed upon operations in computerized systems. Opportunities were provided for operation of the auxiliary machines as well as submission of prepared programs to the computer. Rudiments of punched-card operation and programming were given to an extent that enrollees can further their capabilities in these areas through self-study and use.

3. **Research Design:** Based upon the study of techniques, enrollees designed research studies that were conducted in their local schools or school systems. Open sharing of their progressing work enabled the staff and other group members to evaluate regularly the proposed studies, thereby strengthening their structure. This approach allowed the staff to move from a purely academic consideration to one of application in practice. Encouragement was given to the development of well-designed proposals which could be supported by various agencies of the federal government.
4. **Research Evaluation:** As the final area of the summer program, consideration was given to methods of interpreting and evaluating the findings which were obtained from the proposed studies. Attention was given to the determination of the significance of the statistical results, but even more attention was given to the application of findings to the decision making process of the local system.

B. Academic Year Follow-Up

During the academic year following the summer program, six one-day seminars were held to discuss and evaluate progress on the research under way. Four of the seminars, two each trimester, were held at centers selected for proximity to the districts represented. These meetings were with groups no larger than ten participants each. Toward the end of Trimesters I and II (in December and April) the remaining two seminars were held on the university campus where all enrollees met as a group. In the seminars, solutions to problems encountered were considered and progress of the various projects reported. Assistance was given in the interpretation of findings. Possibilities for other research activities were investigated. When appropriate, specialists from the various departments of the college and the university were sought to answer specific problems encountered by the participants.

EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

A. Program Factors

1. **Objectives:** To improve existing knowledge or skills in the areas of research design and methodology, statistical analysis, program evaluation, data processing, and individual research.

The institute consultants observed that participants developed an awareness of the nature of research and formal evaluation, the need for more, and the reasons for not having more. (They know better what they don't have.)

On a scale from no knowledge or skill to perfect knowledge and skill, the group started with an average performance of approximately the level of the average undergraduate (15%-20%). At the end of the institute (April 2, 1967), the group's average performance was somewhat higher than the level of persons holding the M.Ed. (30%).

The group, at the end of the institute, demonstrated a much greater respect for evidence.

2. To broaden concepts of educational research through some consideration of works in other behavioral sciences.

The institute did not look at works as associated with "other behavioral sciences" except for some identified as psychological.

The group did improve in its understanding and ability to use the vocabulary of behavioral science research.

3. To provide practice and assistance in the design of research projects.

Approximately 25% of the summer work was devoted to this. Approximately 90% of the Saturday seminars was devoted to these objectives. The staff noted significant gains in the ability of participants to design research proposals.

4. To provide or improve rudimentary training in the application of computer operations to research and data processing.

30% of the summer instruction was in this area. None of the time of follow-up seminars was spent in this area. A few of the students became involved in further formal study in this area on their own initiative following the summer training.

5. To provide opportunities for group sharing of information and experience concerning research as motivation for further research activities.

These opportunities were provided throughout the institute. Approximately 75% of the final two-day seminar was devoted to this objective.

6. To institute studies aimed toward the improvement of research activities within the local district.

The institute did have some observed effect in accomplishing this objective. A number of the projects undertaken by the students are being used in the development of research in the local school districts.

7. To assist local districts in conducting institutional studies which can provide better bases for decision making.

Certain of the institute participants obtained information in their follow-up activities that had this effect.

Following the summer training, several of the students were assigned by their employers to work in the formal evaluation of ESEA Title I projects.

8. To encourage the establishment of facilities for the testing of basic research findings in a broad range of actual situations.

A few of the student projects were designed to provide these kinds of facilities. One student prepared a proposal for funding under ESEA Title III which was turned down. Another student is presently negotiating with Title III officials for funding of a project that would lead to such a facility.

9. To encourage cooperative research, development, and dissemination at the local district level and improve communication and cooperation between the university and the local school district.

The students came to know and gain access to University of Florida professors and to continue to call on them during the regular school year.

10. To encourage and assist in the establishment of centers capable of providing facilities for practicums and internships in training research workers.

No effect of the institute was observed.

Content

The content of the course was very effective and there are no recommended changes; however, we would in the future reduce the emphasis on statistics and computer language and place more emphasis on the practical application of research.

Staff

The staff ratio was satisfactory. We would recommend that a greater number and variety of staff consultants be utilized. This would permit greater diversification of topics and flexibility of presentation.

Trainees

The class size was satisfactory; however, due to the late notification of funding, the selection of candidates was handicapped.

In the future, it would be best to insure a more homogeneous background of participants. There was also a problem created by the fact that some students were taking the course for credit while others were taking it for non-credit. In the future, it would be best if all the students were enrolled for credit.

Facilities

Facilities provided were adequate, although they were scattered across the campus. We would prefer that the facilities be centralized in one building.

Budget

The budget was well planned and utilized, although the travel allowance should have been increased.

B. Major Strengths

We were able to obtain the services of a very capable staff for this particular project. One of the important strengths of the project was the high level of morale noted among the students and the staff. As an example of this morale, the students insisted upon meeting extra hours during the last seminar held in April. Another strength of the program was the very personal way in which the instructors were able to interact with the participants both on a group and individual basis. The staff got to know the individual needs and interests of the participants and were able to interact effectively concerning student interests in the area of research. Although, as noted above, the facilities for the project were dispersed this was not a major handicap. The staff concluded that the project was very effective in teaching the students about how to conduct research.

C. Major Weaknesses

1. The dissimilarity of background of the participants created problems of meeting individual needs.
2. Due to the lateness of notification of funding, selection of participants was handicapped.
3. The directorship of the program changed three times which led to the loss of continuity of administrative matters.

D. Overall Evaluation of the Program

The staff believes that this program was successful in the degree to which the objectives were realized. The program not only contributed to the research effectiveness of the individual participants, but also contributed to the school districts within which these participants served. As indicated above, the very fact that interest of the students in the research was so high was indicative of the growth in the area of research. Generally speaking, the staff felt in its overall evaluation that this was a very successful program.

E. Recommendations

1. Earlier notification of funding would be extremely valuable for planning purposes and selection of participants.
2. Insure that the institute continue over a period of years.
3. It would be advantageous to utilize the same students in an advanced program of the same type.
4. Insure that the directorship of the program remains the same if at all possible. This will allow for continuity of administrative matters.

PROGRAM REPORTS

A. Publicity

No press releases except for the announcement by Congressman Billy Mathews of the grant award and certain university memoranda were made.

B. Application Summary

1. Approximate number of inquiries from prospective trainees (letter or conversation) 40
2. Number of completed applications received 30
3. Number of first rank applications (Applicants who are well-qualified whether or not they were offered admission). Criterion for admissions were based solely on Superintendent's recommendations 30
4. How many applicants were offered admission 30

C. Trainee Support

1. Number of trainees initially accepted in program 30
Number of trainees enrolled at the beginning of program 27
Number of trainees who completed program 27*
*(includes one enrollee who withdrew officially but who attended all sessions)
2. Categorization of trainees
 - a. Number of trainees who principally are elementary or secondary public school teachers 12
 - b. Number of trainees who are principally local public school administrators or supervisors 10
 - c. Number of trainees from state education groups 0
 - d. Number of trainees from colleges or universities, junior colleges, research bureaus, etc.
 - Junior College 2
 - County Research Bureaus 2

D. Program Director's Attendance

1. What was the number of instructional days for the program? (one holiday; one organizational day; and one wrap-up day) 33 days
2. What was the percent of days the director was present? (Director or acting director was present 100% of the time; Director present 83% of time) 100%

E. Financial Summary

	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>Expended or Committed</u>
1. Trainee support	18,413.00	15,296.00
2. Direct Costs	13,913.00	13,581.63
a. Personnel	10,667.00	10,629.16
b. Supplies/Travel	2,749.00	2,711.66
c. Equipment	None	None
d. Other	497.00	241.41
3. Indirect Costs	<u>2,586.00</u>	<u>2,420.77</u>
Total	<u>\$34,912.00</u>	<u>\$31,298.40</u>